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regulative principles for our life. It should bring the strength and inspiration which always come from the personal life of a masterful soul.

Do we not too often, in our earnest efforts to make Christianity real, speak as if we could derive from the teachings of Jesus certain abstract principles which could be applied in a more or less impersonal way to the moral and spiritual problems of our time? Every great reformation centers around some heroic person who has dared to act the convictions of his life. So today the regeneration of our civil and social life is proceeding from a few courageous men who have dared to be honest and straightforward in the presence of corrupting influences. If we are to make the Bible a potent force in this coming social regeneration, we shall most surely effect our aim, not by the academic process of discovering principles underlying the precepts of Jesus, but by discovering in those precepts, and in the principles underlying them, the utterance of that great personality who, because of the greatness of his personal life, is the Savior of mankind. We need, it is true, the educative influence of the principles of the gospel; but, more than this, we need the redemptive power of the great Person who made the gospel.

THE PRIMARY QUESTION IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Another application of the question, which has just been raised, as to the relative importance of personal and impersonal elements, may be seen if we come to consider the problems of Christian morality. Are we, as Christians, to work in the world by principles, or by personal action? Whenever the word "ethics" is mentioned, one thinks immediately that some discussion of moral principles is to be undertaken. If we examine treatises on Christian ethics we find that, usually, primary attention is given to such questions as: What ought a Christian to do? What principles should be employed by a Christian in determining ethical problems?

Now, such an inquiry is, of course, indispensable to right Christian action. But there is a previous question which we sometimes forget to ask. Supposing that I have discovered that a Christian ought to do such and such things, I have still to ask the question:

Am I, as a Christian, willing to do these things? While it is true that much of the current immorality in commercial and social affairs of today is due to lack of clear insight into the impersonal question as to what ought to be done, it is none the less true that a large number of men would admit abstractly that certain practices ought to be changed, but would not be so ready to say: "I, as a Christian, will do my best to change them." There are in every state laws on the statute-books which go unenforced, not because the laws themselves are wrong, but because citizens have not asked themselves the personal question concerning their obedience to law. It is a comparatively easy matter to attend a mass-meeting, or to sign a petition indicating that, as a Christian, I believe certain action ought to be taken by somebody. It is equally easy to go from the mass-meeting, or from the signature of the petition, to my personal affairs without asking the question whether I, personally, am willing to undergo the sacrifice necessary to the action which I have theoretically approved. If the seventh chapter of Romans is a bit of Paul's own spiritual biography, its personal question seems to have been far more serious to him than the more general question of ethical principles. He realized that to bring himself personally into surrender to what he knew to be right was the most difficult task to which he could address himself.

The study of Jesus' relation to his disciples reveals his insight into this same problem. If we were to take his teachings as the basis of a complete system of ethics, we should find very many gaps. Upon many subjects of great ethical importance he said little or nothing. When he called a disciple to follow him, he usually made some very simple moral requirement which was intended to test, not the man's ability in ethical casuistry, but rather his willingness to do the thing which he saw to be right whenever he saw it was right, no matter at what sacrifice. He required of one disciple to turn his back upon that most precious of all duties, the paying of respect to his dead father. He required of another the giving of his immense wealth, in order to test the man's willingness to sacrifice. He came to a publican sitting at the seat of custom, and said to him simply: "Follow me." He said to his disciples: "He that doth not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

Even that portion of his teachings, which we most commonly attempt to make the basis of a system of Christian principles—the Sermon on the Mount—is rightly understood as a correction of the Pharisees' habit of reducing ethical problems to casuistry. In opposition to this more speculative temper of the Pharisee, Jesus laid down his own very definite demands, calculated, not only to test one's insight into moral principles, but also to test one's willingness to act on those principles, no matter what it might cost.

One of the most agreeable forms of intellectual and spiritual recreation is the discussing of questions in the abstract. President Roosevelt has called men and women who devote themselves exclusively to this delightful speculative task "parlor reformers." Now, such discussion is of value. We need the hour of leisure in which to purify and to correct our ethical notions. But unless we are first men and women with the personal will to do the right, a discussion of the abstract principles of right is very likely to distract our attention from the first duty in life. When we have determined, in facing conditions of today, that something ought to be done by somebody, the only true and courageous thing for a follower of Christ to say is: "Here am I, send me." It may be that such personal decision may bring upon one persecution at the hands of good men, or the loss of reputation. But Jesus predicted exactly these things for those who would be his true disciples. A question which is of especial pertinence today is whether we are thus proving our right to be disciples of Jesus by asking the personal question of ourselves, and by answering it as disciples of Christ should.